



A Message from the Administration on Aging

The Administration on Aging (AoA) is charged with the responsibility of leading the national effort to celebrate Older Americans Month each year. First proclaimed as “Senior Citizens Month” by President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and later changed to “Older Americans Month” by President Jimmy Carter, the month of May is annually set aside as a time to honor the nation’s 34 million older Americans, recognize their continued contributions to society and call attention to the issues that affect them most. Over the past three decades, AoA has led the effort to ensure that this special month is acknowledged and celebrated in an appropriate fashion.

Last fall, AoA released its theme for Older Americans Month 1997—*Caregiving: Compassion in Action*. Each day, as many as five million older individuals in the United States are recipients of care from more than 22 million informal caregivers made up of family and friends. In fact, the vast majority of caregivers are related to the person to whom they provide care. They are usually spouses and overwhelmingly female. However, husbands and sons are also wonderful sources of support. While many caregivers experience stress and frustration in fulfilling their caregiving responsibilities and often times sacrifice personal opportunities to care for their loved ones, most of them regard the challenge of caregiving as a rewarding and satisfying experience.

The critical and noble work of America’s caregivers is critical to so many older people that we thought the issue of caregiving would be the perfect focus for this year’s Older Americans Month activities. Caregivers, many of whom are older themselves, form the solid foundation of our nation’s unique home and community-based care infrastructure. Thanks to them, millions of Americans are able to grow old with maximum independence and dignity.

As you look through the contents of this year’s Older Americans Month package in preparation for this year’s celebration, we hope you will be inspired and encouraged to join us in paying tribute to older Americans and caregivers of all ages not just during May, but all year long. All of us at AoA wish to thank you for your tireless and ongoing efforts to support older Americans, as well as your dedication to Older Americans Month and all that it represents.

